

Karl Marx and the British Library

Reference: 2017-14-SIC



Supervisor	Dr Diana Siclovan, Research Information Support Officer
Department, Location	Research Development, St Pancras, London
Start date/timeframe	Ideally any time in the period May-December 2017
Duration	3 months (or part-time equivalent – see below) <i>For a part-time placement, the student would be required to spend a minimum of 2 days/week on site at the Library.</i>
Remote-working	Some elements of remote working would be feasible for this placement, if needed – to be agreed with the supervisor in advance.

Context for placement

2018 marks the bicentenary of Karl Marx’s birth, an event that will be commemorated across the world with a range of public events, exhibitions etc. The relationship between the British Library and Karl Marx is an important one. Marx lived in London for most of his adult life and famously spent long days in the reading room of the British Museum (one of the main the predecessors of the British Library), studying an eclectic range of sources and producing his own, today world-famous, writings.

The British Library’s collections hold unique material relating to Marx’s life and work, including a first edition of *Capital* that Marx himself donated to the Library, a first edition copy of the *Communist Manifesto* and Marx’s hand-written reader ticket. In addition, the British Library is of course home to millions of further items relating to the context and legacy of Marx’s work, including the various and conflicting versions of ‘Marxism’ that have proliferated in the centuries after his death.

Given this intimate connection to Marx’s life and work, as well as its wider remit to make intellectual heritage accessible to everyone for research, inspiration and enjoyment, the Library is interested in developing ideas for events or other activities and outputs that will engage the public and research communities with the importance of Karl Marx’s life and his wider legacy. Ideas currently under discussion include an exhibition in the Library’s *Treasures* Gallery, a series of public events, researcher training days, learning activities and/or the production of new interactive online resources.

The PhD placement student will assist with this project by researching creative ways in which the Library can mark Karl Marx’s 200th birthday. Ideally, and depending on the timing of the placement and the nature of the public engagement events or activities, there may also be opportunities to take part in the subsequent promotion and implementation of the agreed programme.

Expected tasks and outcomes

The placement student will be based in the Research Development team, which manages the Library’s collaborative research activities. The student will be supervised by Dr Diana Siclovan, whose research expertise and interests lie in nineteenth-century socialist thought. However, during their time at the Library, the student will work with curators from across the Library’s collections to identify relevant themes and items for the project. At least in the first instance, the topic should be approached from as broad a perspective as possible, taking into account both the nineteenth-century Marx and his later legacy, and considering material from across the world.

There will be scope for the student to shape the project in line with their own research interests, and we are looking for someone who might bring an innovative and creative perspective to the subject of ‘Karl Marx and the British Library’.

The placement student will deliver a staff talk on the outcomes of their research to generate internal discussion about the cross-disciplinary potential of British Library content for public engagement with Marx and his legacy.

The student will then, in consultation with Library colleagues, produce a more detailed report that would include a proposal for a programme of events or other activities to take place in 2018, the year of the Marx bicentenary. The exact format and possibilities for the programme to be proposed will depend on the student’s interests, on the outcomes of their initial research, and on subsequent discussions with Library colleagues and stakeholders. As with all such activities at the Library, the exact shape and focus of any events

that take place in 2018 will be developed taking account other commitments and subject to the internal decision-making and approvals processes of the Library's wide-ranging cultural programme.

Throughout the placement, there will be opportunities for the student to write content for relevant [British Library Blogs](#) about their findings and experience.

We would also expect the student to liaise with other educational, cultural and political institutions in the UK and possibly beyond, to research and discuss how the proposed Library programme would fit in with the global commemoration of Marx's 200th Birthday.

There may be potential for the student to begin drafting a paper about their findings and insights during this placement for submission to an academic journal, either as a sole author or with their British Library supervisor. They will get supported access to Library content beyond what they would receive via a British Library Reader Pass.

Training and experience expected to be gained by student through the placement

The PhD placement student will work with a wide range of experts from across the Library's collections and departments and thus gain an insight into various job profiles and have many unique opportunities for networking. They will develop their understanding of a world-class research Library, its content, structure and remit.

The student will be able to apply their research skills to a different mode of work, with the potential to make an important contribution to the internal development of the Library's cultural programme. They will develop particular insights into the development and planning of exhibitions and cultural events.

The student will be part of a small but dynamic Research Development team and will develop insight into research engagement, research funding and research collaborations, which will benefit their broader understanding of collaborative research projects and their management.

Through writing blog posts, the student will acquire valuable experience of communicating 'academic' subjects to broad and largely non-academic audiences. The staff talk and research report will provide further opportunities to develop communications skills and expertise in engagement with different stakeholders.

Required knowledge and skills

The student needs to have a good understanding of, as well as genuine interest in, Karl Marx's work and both its historical and contemporary significance. We would probably expect the placement student to have a background in history, philosophy, economics, sociology, political science or a related subject, but are open to candidates who wish to approach the topic from a different disciplinary perspective. Either way, they will need to be open to working interdisciplinary and considering a wide range of approaches and methodologies.

The student needs to be proactive and enthusiastic about public engagement, but also flexible and able to approach, engage and collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders within and outside the Library.

Some experience of event management or other kinds of public engagement activities would be desirable.